



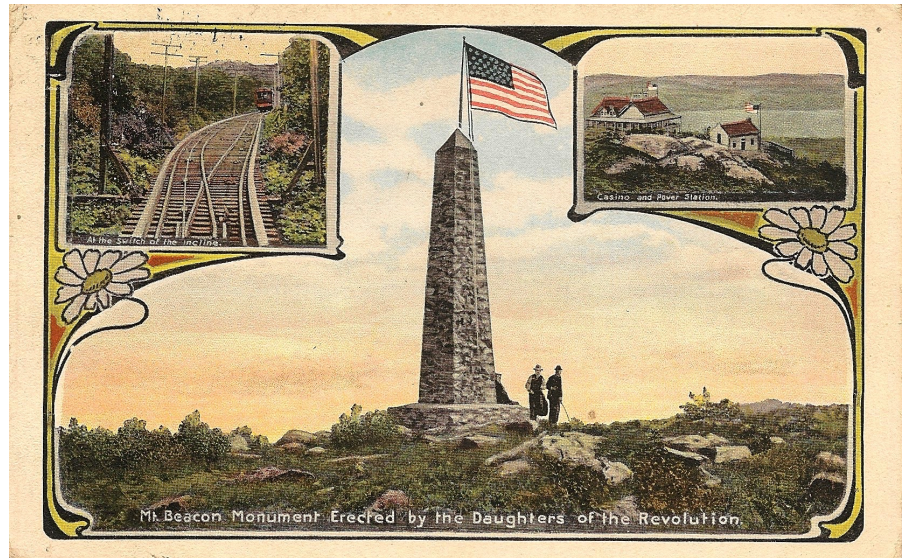
Mt. Beacon's DAR Monument

Find out how Beacon played a role in the Revolutionary War

Grades: Upper elementary (3rd-6th)

Materials Needed:

- Internet access
- Crayons or markers
- Small pebbles, bits of grass, sticks or twigs
- Clay
- Cardboard base (6" x 4") or small paper plate
- Wax, parchment or scrap paper for rolling out the clay
- Small paper American flag glued onto a toothpick
- Toothpicks or pencil



Postcard of the DAR monument from the early 1900s

Essential Questions:

- What role did the City of Beacon play in the Revolutionary War?
- What is the importance of the geography of Beacon?
- How did the City of Beacon get its name?
- What is an obelisk and why is it an important design element?

Overview

The American Revolution was a time when colonists fought for independence from Great Britain and established the United States of America. Britain was demanding money from the colonies to help pay for a recent war against France. The colonists did not want to be taxed as they had no say in government affairs. At first, the colonists protested peacefully, but eventually thirteen colonies united and a war against Great Britain broke out. The Revolutionary War lasted from 1775 until 1783. Mt. Beacon played a role in the fight for freedom against the British. But how?

In 1779, General George Washington ordered a system of log and brush pyramids or “beacons” to be built in order to warn the local militia of invasion by the British. Beacons were placed in a line along the highlands (small mountains) of the New Jersey coast and New York including up on Mt. Beacon.

Activity 1 – Map Study

Where were the beacons placed? Click on the link below and the flame icon for Mt. Beacon.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1MRncpEUbHcZe7J_jdtLBolLaH2Q&hl=en&ll=40.90060161010373%2C-73.77529453281252&z=8

1. Read the text that pops up on the left side of your screen.

What group erected the monument on top of Mount Beacon?	
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2. List the other “beacons” within a 20-mile radius of Beacon

Monument
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

3. Think about the geography and where the beacons were located.

What body of water were the beacons located near?	
Why do you think it was important for the beacons to be located near this body of water?	
Why would General Washington have the beacons built on top of mountains? What is the benefit?	

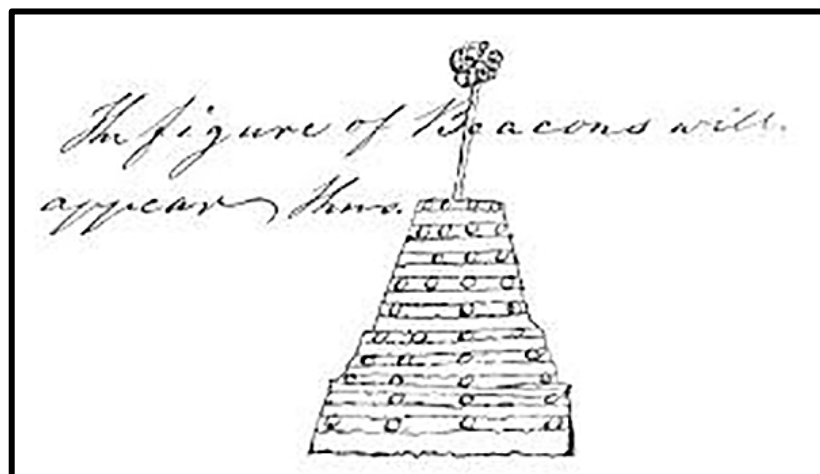
Activity 2 – Construct A Beacon

Imagine if you were in the militia in 1779. You would receive direct orders from General Washington. The British are coming! You are in charge building a beacon on top of Mt. Beacon. This beacon will be lit to warn the troops, family, and friends of incoming attack. Use a pyramid-shaped design and build it tall... so when it is lit it can be seen from a great distance. The local militia received the below directions and illustration. The photograph shows the view from the top of Mt. Beacon. When lit, the beacon fires could be seen across the valley for miles.

“It will be made of logs, 14 feet square at bottom to rise in in pyramid form 20 feet high, being six-foot square on top with a stout sapling 30 feet tall rising through its center. Inside this structure dried and green wood would be placed, with signal flags hung by day from the top of the sapling. When lit at night, these beacons could burn for an hour and be seen up to 20 miles away.” *Modified primary document adapted from General Washington to Brigadier General Henry Knox while Knox was at Pluckemin Cantonment, New Jersey in 1779.*



Photo by Michael Vasaturo



“The figure of Beacons will appear thus.”

Can you construct this using natural materials? Gather sticks of various sizes. Place the 4 largest sticks on the ground in the shape of a square. Then stack smaller and smaller rows of sticks or twigs perpendicular to the previous row. Add bits of leaves inside the middle of the

tower. **DO NOT IGNITE. THIS IS A MODEL ONLY.** You can also use pretzel sticks, Lincoln Logs, or toothpicks on a tabletop inside your house.

Activity 3 – Learn about the DAR Monument

To remember the heroic deeds of the men and women that fought to gain liberty for our country, a group of women from the Melzingah Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in Beacon built a monument on top of Mt. Beacon. The monument was a symbol of the beacons used to warn the Hudson Valley of the approaching British. It was unveiled and dedicated on July 4, 1900. The monument was built of native stone in the shape of a pyramid standing 27 feet tall topped by a flagpole and flag to be flown on government holidays. Unfortunately, the monument was destroyed when it was struck by lightning in 1934. A smaller version was rebuilt soon after.



DAR Monument on Mt. Beacon
Photo by Michael Vasaturo

One hundred years later on July 4, 2000, hundreds of people climbed Mt. Beacon to celebrate the monument's centennial, signed a copy of the Declaration of Independence and swore on an oath of loyalty to the US. Nearby, a replica of the original beacon was constructed and burned by the 2nd New York Living History Association costumed reenactment group. The 18-foot replica was constructed of timbers from the site of Fort Montgomery and built to Revolutionary War specifications. You can visit the DAR monument at the summit of Mt. Beacon. Did you know that our beautiful city was named after the beacons?

Activity 4 – Read About the DAR Monument in a 1900 Newspaper

Read this newspaper account of the dedication of the DAR Monument from the New York Times (July 5, 1900). Why did local communities share in the celebration? Imagine that you were one of the guests on the mountain that evening. Draw a picture of the scene on the mountain and valley as described in the last paragraph. How many beacons did you draw?

MONUMENT ON MOUNT BEACON.

FISHKILL LANDING, N. Y., July 4.—Melzingan Chapter, the local Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, to-night dedicated a monument on the top of Mount Beacon, 1,600 feet above the level of the river. Delegations from chapters from various parts of the State were present. A large number of spectators witnessed the dedication. During the revolution this mountain was used by Washington's army for beacon lights.

An address was made by Mr. Samuel Verplanck, State Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Rev. Dr. J. Howard Suydam of Rhinebeck also spoke. The monument was unveiled by Miss Emily De Windt Seaman, Regent of Melzingan Chapter.

It was dark when the exercises ended, and beacon fires were started. By arrangements there were responsive fires from the Military Academy at West Point, from the home of Gen. Daniel Butterfield, Craigside, at Cold Spring; from Storm King Mountain, and from Lake Mohonk. There was also a big display of fireworks, and the night river boats stopped and threw their searchlights on the scene. Newburg also had an elaborate display of fireworks. The monument stands 27 feet high, and can be seen for some distance up and down the river. There is a large flag staff on top.

Activity 5 – Make a Model of the DAR Monument



Clay model of the DAR Monument

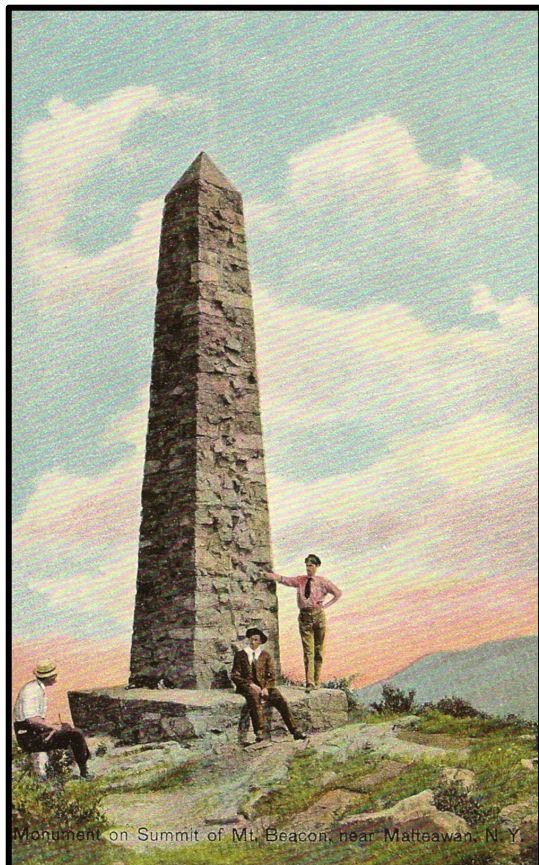
Try making a model of the DAR monument with clay! *You will need:* crayons, small pebbles & bits of grass, clay, cardboard or a small paper plate, parchment or wax paper, American flag, & toothpicks.

1. Use a small piece of cardboard or a paper plate for a base. Color it to look like a grassy and rocky mountain side
2. Set down the parchment or wax paper on a table to use as a work surface for the clay. Pinch a ball of clay, roll it out and flatten to make the base. Roll out the rest of the clay into a log shape and then flatten the sides to create a rectangular prism (four long sides and two short sides). Shape the clay at the top to create a pyramid.
3. Use the toothpick to carve lines into the monument to make it look like stones.
4. Draw a small flag and glue or tape it onto a toothpick. Add the flag to the top of the pyramid. Place your monument on the cardboard base and add some pebbles and bits of grass.

Activity 6– Obelisk Hunt

The DAR Monument is in the shape of an obelisk. An obelisk is a stone pillar, typically having a square or rectangular cross section and a pyramidal top, set up as a monument or landmark. The ancient Egyptians created this form to commemorate an individual or event. Why do you think the Daughters of the American Revolution chose this shape for their monument? The Daughters were proud of their ancestors who played a role in creating an independent country from Great Britain. It was dedicated to the men who were stationed atop the mountain to maintain the series of signal fire during the Revolutionary War. To this day, it serves as a reminder of their valor.

Did you know that there are many obelisks in Beacon? Obelisks were a popular design used in cemeteries. As they have four sides, there is plenty of room for engraving the names of loved ones that are buried in the cemetery. Obelisks are larger than other monuments and tend to stand out. Look for obelisks at St. Luke's cemetery, especially in the Presbyterian section. The Fairview Cemetery features a monument in the shape of an obelisk to honor Beacon soldiers during the Civil War. Look carefully at the bust of George Washington on Teller Avenue. The base of Washington was fashioned after the DAR Monument. Bring a sketch pad and draw the monuments in Beacon. To receive a free Beacon cemetery trail guide, please email us at beaconhistorical@gmail.com.



Postcard of the DAR monument (1900s)



Soldiers & Sailors Monument-Fairview Cemetery

Activity 7 – Learn about Madam Brett and the Melizingah Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution

Did you know that Beacon has the oldest home in Dutchess County! The Madam Brett house was built around 1709. During the Revolutionary War, the homestead was used for shelter and as a storage facility by the patriots. American

Revolutionary leaders such as George Washington, the Marquis de La Fayette, and Baron von Steuben are said to have been guests in the house. Today it is the home of the Melizingah Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Aside from the DAR Monument on Mt. Beacon, the Daughters are dedicated to preserving local historic



sites through grave markers, road signs, and our very own George Washington monument. The Brett house is located at 50 Van Nydeck Avenue at the corner of Teller Avenue. Please visit <https://www.melzingahnsdar.org/madam-brett-homestead> for more information and hours.

Activity 8 – Learn about the Daughters of the American Revolution and YOUR Ancestors



Who are the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)? DAR members come from a variety of backgrounds and interests, but all share a common bond of having an ancestor who helped contribute to securing the independence of the USA. To learn more about the DAR visit www.dar.org. Click in the search bar for “educational resources” for interesting lessons about American history.

Do you know who your ancestors are? Start by asking your family to list all the relatives and their relations and record in the form of a chart. For more information visit www.dar.org, www.dar.org, www.ancestry.com, www.findagrave.com, www.familysearch.org, www.ngsgenealogy.org.

Activity 9 – Learn more! Go to the Library and Check Out These Books...

- ***Sybil Ludington: Revolutionary War Rider***, Abbot, E.F. Square Fish, 2017. Read about a brave woman who made history... right in our very backyard!
- ***Independent Dames: What You Never Knew about the Women and Girls of the American Revolution***. Anderson, Laurie Halse and Matt Faulkner. Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008.
- ***The American Revolution for Kids: A History with 21 Activities*** Herbert, Janis. Chicago Review Press, 2002. Great activities to do at home including learning about the Continental Congress and the value of personal voice by protesting injustice.
- ***American Revolution: Discover how a few patriots battled a mighty empire - from The Boston Massacre to the Birth of a New Nation***, Murray, Stuart. DK Eyewitness Books, 2015. Great overview of Revolutionary War events, pictures of period artifacts and people in period clothing, and interesting stories.
- ***Ancient Egypt: Explore the Nile Valley Civilizations - from colossal temples to tombs packed with riches***. Hart, George. DK Eyewitness Books, 2014. Great for an overview of the Egyptian empires with full color photographs of period artifacts, people in period clothing, and interesting facts.
- ***1,000 Facts About Ancient Egypt***. Honovich, Nancy. National Geographic Children's Books, 2019. An intriguing read for multiple skill levels, with information about the Egyptian empires in general.
- ***Treasury of Egyptian Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Monsters and Mortals***, Napoli, Donna Jo and Christina Balit. National Geographic Children's Books, 2013. Egyptian religion and mythology are key to helping kids understand how the architecture migrated through the centuries from Egypt to America and to other places.
- ***The Kids' Family Tree Book***, Leavitt, Caroline, Sterling Children's Books, 2017. Basic book focused on family stories and research projects.
- ***Who Do You Think You Are? Be a Family Tree Detective***, Waddell, Dan. Candlewick, 2011. Basic book on how to start research, decipher photographs and censuses and what questions to ask.